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C O N F I D E N T I A L ANKARA 000523

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR EUR, SRAP

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/08/2019
TAGS: [PREL](#) [MOPS](#) [NATO](#) [AF](#) [TU](#)
SUBJECT: TURKEY STEPS UP TO THE PLATE ON AFGHANISTAN

REF: A. USNATO SUMMIT MATRIX E-MAIL
[1](#)B. ANKARA 522

Classified By: Pol-Mil Counselor Anthony Godfrey, Reasons 1.4 (b,d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary and comment: Turkey will more than double its troop presence in Afghanistan, from about 820 to almost 1900. MFA officials provided clarification to the additional Turkish contributions listed in ref a and said that the GOT is actively considering sending an additional PRT to Afghanistan. MFA contacts said Turkish CHOD Basbug told his counterparts at the April 1 Afghan-Pakistan-Turkey trilateral held in Ankara that Turkey was giving "positive consideration" to sending an additional PRT to Afghanistan. We should use upcoming visits by Turkish officials to Washington and senior US officials to Turkey to express appreciation for Turkey's significant commitments in support of Afghanistan and Pakistan, and press Turkey to commit to deploying the additional PRT. End summary and comment.

[1](#)2. (C) MFA contacts confirmed most of the recent contributions announced by Turkey at the NATO summit (ref a). These included:

- 5 million dollars for election support;
- 1.5 million euros to the Afghan National Army Trust fund;
- 2 million dollars to the helicopter bridging initiative;
- 4 military teams to RC-North during the elections (three previously announced, one new);
- One KC-135 tanker aircraft in support of the elections;
- Resuming command of RC Capital in November 2009 (which would increase its total troop presence in Afghanistan to about 1900);
- Deployment of three additional Operational Mentoring Liaison Teams (OMLTs) in Kabul;
- Consideration of deploying gendarmerie trainers to Afghanistan as part of the European Gendarmerie Initiative.

[1](#)3. (C) MFA officials said that Turkey did not pledge 100 million dollars for road work in Kabul, but did say that Turkey had committed a year ago to build 100 kilometers of roads in Kabul, which he estimated to be worth about 40 million dollars. According to MFA Afghanistan department head Babur Girgin, this project still has not been finalized due to disagreements between the GOT and the Kabul mayor's office over how contracts for the project would be handled; these disagreements remain unresolved. Girgin did note that the GOT was planning to pledge 100 million dollars at the April 17 Donors Conference for Pakistan in Tokyo (Ankara 522).

Second PRT Being Considered

[1](#)4. (C) In addition to the above contributions announced at

the NATO Summit and earlier, Turkey is actively considering whether it could take on the leadership of a new PRT. On April 8, Babur Hizlan, the MFA Deputy Director General for South Asia, told us that Turkey's Chief of General Staff Ilker Basbug mentioned this possibility during the third Turkey - Afghanistan - Pakistan trilateral meeting held in Ankara on April 1. Hizlan said that while this was still far from a final decision, Turkey understood that there are PRTs in Afghanistan currently responsible for more than one province; Turkey would consider forming a PRT which would then take responsibility for one of those provinces. MFA contacts also note that Nimroz and areas in the south and east would not be suitable for Turkey's civilian-led PRT model.

Potential for Transport Helicopters

15. (C) Citing an unnamed "official source," an April 8 article on the on-line English language edition of "Hurriyet" newspaper reported that Turkey was considering plans to send 19 Russian Mi-17 utility helicopters to Afghanistan. MFA officials said they had not heard of any discussions related to such a proposal and expressed skepticism about the veracity of the report. (Note: Turkey did offer in November 2008 a batch of 23 H-300 training helicopters for Afghanistan, but a NATO-led team from Kabul visited Turkey in March 2009 and determined that the H-300 helicopters were not suitable for Afghanistan. During this inspection trip, the team also noticed some Mi-17 helicopters in hangars and were told that the helicopters belonged to Turkey's Jandarma Command, but were not in service).

Comment

16. (C) Turkey significantly increased its commitment to Afghanistan, more than doubling its troop commitments, doubtless in response to President Obama's visit. It is actively considering deployment of a second PRT, and we should press the Turks to commit to this while the iron is still hot. FM Babacan's participation at the April 17 Tokyo Donor's Conference for Pakistan, MFA Deputy Undersecretary Sinirlioglu's visit to Washington during the week of April 20, and upcoming visits by senior US military officials to Turkey provide good opportunities to close the deal on the additional PRT. While we have not been able to verify reports of a possible plan to send helicopters to Afghanistan, it would also be useful to continue to encourage Turkey to offer this capability.

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Jeffrey